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## OLR Bill Analysis

### sSB 652

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING REFERRALS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO THE BIRTH-TO-THREE PROGRAM.***

#### **SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to establish a program, within available appropriations, to address the developmental needs of children age three or younger who are substantiated abuse or neglect victims or have been the subject of an assessment under the differential response program (see BACKGROUND).

As part of the program, the bill requires DCF to screen such children twice annually for developmental and social-emotional delays through evidence-based assessments, including physical examinations, social and emotional evaluations, and questionnaires. The department must refer any child found, through the screening, to exhibit such delays to (1) the Birth-to-Three Program (see BACKGROUND) or if ineligible for the Birth-to-Three Program (2) the Children's Trust Fund's Help Me Grow prevention program (see BACKGROUND) or a similar appropriate program.

Starting by July 1, 2014, the bill requires DCF to begin submitting annual reports to the Children's Committee for inclusion in the committee's annual report card on state policies and programs affecting children. The report must include the:

1. number of Connecticut children age three or younger who are (a) substantiated abuse or neglect victims and (b) being served through the differential response program and
2. percentage of children (presumably in the state) (a) who received evidence-based assessments by a DCF-contracted provider

during the previous year and (b) receiving evidence-based developmental support services through the birth-to-three program or through a DCF-contracted provider.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2013

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Differential Response Program***

Through the differential response program, DCF can refer families to appropriate community providers for assessment and services, (1) at any time during an investigation in an abuse or neglect case or (2) when it decides not to investigate such a case that it classifies as presenting a lower risk. These referrals can occur only when there has been an initial safety assessment of the family's circumstances and criminal background checks have been performed on all adults involved in the report.

### ***Birth-To-Three Program***

The Birth-to-Three Program is designed to strengthen families' capacities to meet the developmental and health-related needs of their infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities. Eligible families work with service providers to develop Individualized Family Services Plans, with services starting within 45 days of the plan's completion. The plans are reviewed at least once every six months and rewritten at least annually.

The Department of Developmental Services is the state's lead agency for the Birth-to-Three Program, but families may get referrals from it to other state agencies' programs, depending on the number and type of disabilities a child has.

### ***Children's Trust Fund's Help Me Grow Program***

The Children's Trust Fund is a division of the Department of Social Services. Its Help Me Grow program helps parents and child health and service providers access community based early identification, prevention, and intervention services for child developmental or behavioral problems through a toll-free number.

***Related Bill***

SB 832, reported favorably by the Children's Committee, changes the name of the differential response program to the family assessment program.

Children Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/12/2013)